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WE, Shanta M. Modak and Milind S. Shintre, citizens of the United States and India, respectively, and having addresses at 184 Howland Avenue, River Edge, New Jersey 07661 and 105 Haven Avenue, Apartment 1F, New York, New York 10032, respectively, have made an invention relating to

**ZINC SALT COMPOSITIONS FOR THE PREVENTION
OF DERMAL AND MUCOSAL IRRITATION**

of which the following is a

SPECIFICATION

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application is a continuation-in-part of pending International Patent Application PCT/US03/03896 filed February ⁷~~27~~, 2003, which claimed priority to provisional United States Patent Application Serial Number 60/355,549 filed February 7, 2002, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entireties.

1. INTRODUCTION

[0002] The present invention relates to methods and compositions which employ low concentrations of combinations of zinc salts to prevent the irritation of skin or mucous membranes that may be caused by therapeutic agents, by personal hygiene products, or by various physical, chemical, mechanical, or biological irritants, including infectious agents.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that hospital-acquired infections cost the U.S. healthcare system \$4.5 billion a year, and that 80% of these infections are